CLAIMS:

1. A method for preparing a roll of film for development, the method comprising:

receiving a film magazine having a roll of film therein at a film unload station of a film processing system;

extracting a tongue of said roll of film from said magazine;

unwinding the roll of film from said magazine;

cutting the trailing end of the film from said magazine;

transporting a leading end of said film to a leader splicing apparatus of the film processing system; and

splicing a trailing end of a leader to the leading end of said film, wherein a leading end of the leader is threaded at least partially through a developing apparatus of the film processing system;

wherein during said unwinding step, the method further comprises inspecting the film for defects and imperfections.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said defects and imperfections include at least one of cuts, scratches, tears and missing perforations on said film.

3. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further steps of:

inspecting said film for proper length during said unwinding step; and

rewinding the film back into the film magazine if a defect, imperfection or improper film length is detected during said inspecting step.

4. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further step of splicing a trailing end of said film to a leading end of a new section of leader.

5. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further step of conveying the film to a development station adapted to develop exposed images on said film.

6. A method according to claim 5, comprising the further step of controlling a temperature at the development station through a heating system.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein said heating system includes at least a heated roller provided in a conveying path of said film.

8. A method according to claim 6, wherein said heating system includes at least a heated roller and a heated element.